

COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY SEISMOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATIONS

JANUARY 26, 1925.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. JONES of Washington, from the Committee on Commerce,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 8308]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8308) authorizing the Coast and Geodetic Survey to make seismological investigations, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon, and recommend that the bill do pass without amendment.

The bill has the approval of the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

The following is the House report on this bill:

[House Report No. 540, Sixty-eighth Congress, first session]

The Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8308) authorizing the Coast and Geodetic Survey to make seismological investigations, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report thereon with a recommendation that it pass.

Investigations in seismology have heretofore been under the Weather Bureau of the Department of Agriculture. The Coast and Geodetic Survey, under the Department of Commerce, has for many years also conducted investigations of a more comprehensive character. Both of these departments have agreed, as indicated by letters hereto attached, that this work properly belongs to the Coast and Geodetic Survey. This bill is intended to provide for the work in accordance with that understanding. The bill, if enacted, will require no new appropriation and is not in conflict with the financial program of the President or the Bureau of the Budget.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, April 8, 1924.

Hon. SAMUEL E. WINSLOW,
Chairman Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR CONGRESSMAN: I am returning herewith H. R. 8308, a bill authorizing the Coast and Geodetic Survey to make seismological investigations, and for other purposes, submitted to me with your letter of April 1, 1924.

This bill is essentially the same as H. R. 4515, mentioned in my letter to you under date of January 28, 1924, with the elimination of the second section of that bill.

I am advised by the Director of the Budget that this bill is not in conflict with the financial program of the President, and I recommend favorable action upon it.

The effect of the passage of this bill will be to transfer the investigations in seismology now authorized by law to be performed by the Weather Bureau to the Coast and Geodetic Survey. This transfer is agreeable to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce, the Chief of the Weather Bureau, and the Director of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, who after proper conferences concluded that the seismological investigations could best be carried out by the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

The Coast and Geodetic Survey has had seismographs in operation at its five magnetic observatories since 1904 to supplement the magnetic work in ascertaining whether there is any connection between volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and magnetic disturbances. These instruments have been operated at very little expense and have contributed valuable data for seismological investigations.

Faithfully yours,

HERBERT HOOVER, *Secretary of Commerce.*

The Secretary of Agriculture wrote a letter in reference to H. R. 4515, a bill containing similar provisions, which, so far as pertinent, is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
Washington, January 19, 1924.

Hon. SAMUEL E. WINSLOW,

*Chairman Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce,
House of Representatives.*

DEAR MR. WINSLOW: I am returning herewith the copy of bill H. R. 4515, submitted with your letter of January 10, with a request for report and views thereon.

The only part of this bill which has reference to the work of the Department of Agriculture is comprised in the first section, the purpose of which is to authorize the Coast and Geodetic Survey to conduct investigations in seismology and to include such investigations and reports of this character as have heretofore been made by the Weather Bureau of this department.

This question has been very intimately considered by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce during the past two years, and all parties interested are satisfied that the conduct of investigations in seismology by the Coast and Geodetic Survey and the transfer thereto of work of this kind heretofore done by the Weather Bureau is in the best interest of the administration of this Government activity. Accordingly, the enactment of this legislation has my full concurrence and support.

* * * * *

There is one important point which I wish to make entirely clear. The meteorological service of the Signal Corps (later the Weather Bureau) was organized by act of Congress in 1870, and very early in its history it began to collect earthquake reports of one kind or another from its cooperative and other observers. As the science of seismology developed one or two simple instruments were fabricated in the shops of the bureau for securing registrations of earthquake motions. Many years later a question arose as to the authority of law for the performing of this work by the Weather Bureau, and the Comptroller of the Treasury ruled that the organic act of the Weather Bureau did not authorize it to engage in seismological work, although it had been conducting these observations for nearly 30 years. The matter was subsequently brought to the attention of Congress, and the word "seismology" was inserted in the language of the Weather Bureau appropriation simply for the purpose of authorizing the continuance of the observations and investigations conducted by it.

No appropriations of any kind have ever been made throughout the whole history of the bureau for the conduct of seismological work. The only thing the bureau has done has been to collect observations of felt earthquakes from its cooperative and unpaid observers and similar reports from regular observers, including reports prepared from records of automatic instruments maintained by colleges, universities, and various institutions throughout the country which in recent years have installed and maintained seismographs of their own. This work has always been on a cooperative basis, and no appreciable sums of money have been expended by the Weather Bureau, either for the collection or for the

publication of these reports. In fact, the only project charge that has been set up by the Weather Bureau for this work has been an estimate of the small percentage of time devoted to the collection of reports at times of occurrence of occasional seismic disturbances in the United States by the regular commissioned personnel of the bureau incidental to their regular duties.

In the original negotiations between the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce concerning the transfer of this activity it was clearly pointed out that no funds from the Weather Bureau could become available for the conduct of seismological work in the Coast and Geodetic Survey. It seems important to make this matter clear, because I am told it has been represented to the Chief of the Weather Bureau that the funds for this work were procurable from the appropriations of the Weather Bureau, which, as explained above, is not the case.

Sincerely yours,

HENRY C. WALLACE, *Secretary.*

S R—68-2—vol 1—22

○

...of these reports. In fact, the only subject which has been
...for this work has been an estimate of the amount of
...of time devoted to the collection of reports as items of scientific
...in the United States by the United States Coast and Geodetic
...to the regular duties of the Surveyors.
...the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, the Department of the Interior,
...of this activity, I was unable to obtain any
...which could be made available for the purpose of
...the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. It seems, however,
...that it has been represented to the Coast
...that the funds for this work were included in the
...of the Weather Bureau, which is explained above.

Henry C. Watson, Surveyor